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But What About Those 750 KGB Accomplices?

NEW YORK—So the Soviet Union now kicks out five Americans—it is here-we-go-again time. Diplomats are given to tit-for-tat retaliation, and while this is understandable, surely the country that created Barnum & Bailey and Disney could come up with something more imaginative.

Last September, I have occasion to recall, it had lately been highlighted in more than one documentary that the new Soviet Embassy in Washington presides over the city in approximately the same way that the Eiffel Tower presides over Paris. If the KGB had approached the city of Paris and asked, please, might it lease the Eiffel Tower to facilitate the interception of radio and telephone traffic emanating from Paris and the city had acceded to the request, the difference in the ambient advantages enjoyed by the Soviet Union over those it currently enjoys in Washington would not be noticeable.

It was a Canadian documentary that first called to our attention what was happening in the new Soviet building. Super-modern equipment, we discovered, "sprouts from the Soviet Embassy like the bristles of a porcupine, and no conversation conducted in other than super-scramble is secure from interception." A casual telephone call from the secretary of defense to the secretary of state, if there is such a thing, can be picked up by the Soviet Embassy and studied hours later in the Kremlin and by Georgi Arbatov at the Institute for the Study of the U.S.A. and Canada.

On top of which, we are constantly being reminded that the Soviet Union has diddled and dawdled over our own request for a new embassy in Moscow, assigning us a site some feet below sea level, and even now, 20

years later, the structure is not complete. Why? Well, years ago, Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker came back from a tour of Stalin's Russia and said it was really marvelous over there, no problem with labor unions. A Soviet spokesman would no doubt sigh and say that the Soviet Union is now running into labor union problems.

Late last year, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger came out with a concrete proposal to do something about the congestion of Soviet spies in America. Europe has had pretty much the same problem, especially Germany. A cursory look at the headlines last winter raised the question whether there are more communists in East Germany or in West Germany, and headlines over one weekend last spring from the federal courtroom in Baltimore raised similar questions about San Diego, which was made to look like a farm system for the KGB.

The English had their exchange on the spy question a year ago. Expelling 25 Soviet KGB agents posing as diplomats, Margaret Thatcher ran into the other face of

Mikhail Gorbachev when he promptly expelled a score of British diplomats. It came at just the perfect moment—after Gorbachev had spent 12 days, more or less nonstop, spooning with Western journalists and diplomats in Operation Ingratiation, preceding the summit conference with President Reagan.

The effect in Great Britain (however short-lived) was quite wonderful. It recalled the moment in the '30s when the children's radio idol, Don Carney, who every night would read children's stories for an hour or so, ended an hour by commenting to an aide, "There, I guess that'll hold the little bastards for another night." The trouble was that the little bastards all heard that remark, because the radio signal man had neglected to switch Carney off the air. He paid for that by suspension from the airwaves for a period. One can be confident that his sentence will prove longer than Gorbachev's, who in no time flat can resume Operation Ingratiation and find his palace filled up again overnight with courtiers.

Of course, we should follow up on Weinberger's suggestion and get rid of all those excess KGB accomplices, approximately 750 of them. But we should go beyond that, and advise the Soviet agents that we have just finished rezoning that area of Washington in which their embassy squats; we're most fearfully sorry about it, but it is going to become a bird sanctuary, because there is a species of birds that profits from the higher altitude. But worry not: we have located a fine piece of property for their embassy, which will be available just as soon as we have finished the excavation project on the Potomac.

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